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Letter dated 4 March 2015 from the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In my capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see annex) for distribution to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 9 of its resolution 68/12 of 26 November 2013.

The report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2014.

(*Signed*) Fodé **Seck**
Chair
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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Annex

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 68/12 of 26 November 2013, the General Assembly proclaimed 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and requested the Committee to organize related activities in cooperation with Governments, United Nations organizations, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations. This decision came one year after the 2012 decision of the General Assembly to admit Palestine as an Observer State to the United Nations.

2. The objective of the International Year was to promote solidarity with the Palestinian people and generate further momentum and international support for the realization of their inalienable rights. The Year contributed through various activities and programmes organized by Member States, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, civil society organizations and other partners to keeping the following elements at the top of the international agenda:

(a) The core themes regarding the question of Palestine, including the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and independence;

(b) Support for the peace process towards a permanent settlement in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations;

(c) Obstacles to the peace process, particularly those requiring urgent action, such as settlements, the situation in Jerusalem, the blockade of Gaza and the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(d) Mobilization of international, regional and national action towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Given the paramount importance of the issue of Palestinian political prisoners, the Committee also promoted an in-depth analysis of the status of these prisoners in accordance with international law, examining the issue in the context of the peace process, and identified practical steps to promote a solution.

3. In its 2014 programme of work the Committee proposed to organize the following events, all of which incorporated a segment devoted to the International Year:

(a) A high-level meeting with the League of Arab States and the Committee, to be held in Cairo;

(b) A United Nations seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people, to be held in Nairobi;

(c) A United Nations international meeting on the question of Palestine, to be held in Quito;

(d) A round table on the legal aspects of the new international status of the State of Palestine and on the status of Palestinian political prisoners under international law, to be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

4. During the reporting period, the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Bureau focused on bringing the attention of the international community to the 2014 International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, mobilizing support for ending the Israeli occupation and realizing the two-State solution, in order for the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination. The Committee monitored the situation on the ground and the political developments, implemented its programme of international meetings and conferences, and held consultations with representatives of Governments, national parliaments, interparliamentary organizations and civil society.

5. The International Year was launched on 16 January 2014 by the President of the General Assembly and Deputy-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson. The secretariat of the Committee sent notes verbales and letters to Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations to inform about the International Year and mobilize participation.

II. Activities organized by the Committee

6. In addition to its periodic meetings, the Committee organized the following events at Headquarters within the framework of the International Year:

(a) Screening of the documentary film *Where Should the Birds Fly?*, followed by a discussion, on 20 January;

(b) Screening of the Academy Award-nominated documentary film *5 Broken Cameras*, followed by a discussion, on 19 February;

(c) Briefing by a representative of Defence for Children International Palestine, on 24 February;

(d) Screening of the Academy Award-nominated film *Omar*, followed by a discussion, on 1 May;

(e) Screening of *Flying Paper*, a documentary on Palestinian youth in Gaza, followed by a briefing by the Director of Operations in Gaza of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and a discussion with the film's director, on 21 May;

(f) Special meeting of the Committee to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, on 9 July;

(g) Briefing by Hanan Ashrawi, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and Member of the Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee, on 2 September;

(h) Lecture by Noam Chomsky on the prospects for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on 14 October;

(i) Fashion show by Palestinian-Italian designer Jamal Taslaq, on 11 November.

7. The annual commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People took place on 29 November. In 2014, the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA attended the special meeting of the Committee. In the evening, a special photo exhibition by UNRWA was opened by the Committee Chair and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. The Secretary-General and the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden spoke on that occasion. The exhibit opening was followed by a cultural event showcasing the Joubran Trio, an internationally acclaimed trio of oud players.

8. Outside New York, on 10 March, the Committee held a joint meeting with the League of Arab States at its headquarters in Cairo aimed at reinforcing the critical support of all Arab States for the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Cairo Declaration, a Joint Declaration by the Committee and the League of Arab States, was adopted at the end of the meeting.

9. The following international events within the framework of the International Year were held under the auspices of the Committee:

(a) United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine in Quito on 25 and 26 March, with a focus on the recognition of the State of Palestine by countries in the region and support for the two-State solution. On the margins, the Committee delegation met with Ricardo Patiño, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Integration of Ecuador, and other senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ecuadorian Parliament;

(b) United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Quito on 26 March, where, representatives of civil society expressed the need for a "dialogue for peace" between Israelis and Palestinians. Diasporas in Uruguay and Chile provided examples of civil society ready to overcome prejudice to find common ground and bring the two communities closer together, rather than thinking of one another as enemies;

(c) United Nations Roundtable on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine, which focused on the legal status of the State of Palestine and the ramifications for administrative detainees and other Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention facilities. This meeting was held at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 24 and 25 April. On the margins of the round table, the Committee delegation held meetings with senior officials of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Committee of the Red Cross. While in Geneva, the delegation also met with the Director-General of the World Health Organization and the Acting Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union;

(d) International Meeting on the Question of Jerusalem, jointly organized with the Organization for Islamic Cooperation and the Government of the Republic of Turkey, in Ankara on 12 and 13 May. The meeting focussed on the status of Jerusalem, in particular the issues pertaining to the holy sites, as well as on the role of the international community in supporting a peaceful resolution of this important issue. On the margins, the Committee delegation met with Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, and other senior officials at

the Ministry, as well as with Secretary-General Iyad bin Amin Madani of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation;

(e) Public Forum on the Question of Jerusalem, organized in cooperation with the Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies in Ankara on 14 May, which included a moderated discussion on the evolution of the peace process, followed by a screening of the film *Omar*;

(f) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on 1 and 2 July, with a focus on solidifying the economic underpinnings of an independent State;

(g) United Nations International Meeting of Parliamentarians in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, focusing on the role of parliamentarians in ensuring respect for international law, at United Nations Headquarters on 21 November;

(h) International Conference of Local Governments and Civil Society Organizations in Support of Palestinian Rights, organized in collaboration with the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity, in Seville, Spain, on 2 and 3 December, which included discussions on how local governments can support the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination.

10. The above-mentioned events were attended by representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations system entities, as well as parliamentarians and representatives of civil society and the media. Detailed information about the meetings and their outcome is available on the "Question of Palestine" website maintained by the Division of Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

III. Activities by United Nations offices and Member States

Department of Public Information

11. The Department of Public Information, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/12, worked closely with the Division for Palestinian Rights to actively promote the observance of the 2014 International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, including by providing strategic guidance to the network of United Nations information centres and other relevant United Nations stakeholders; preparing content for the dedicated websites; assembling and disseminating a comprehensive information package on the question of Palestine; ensuring social media coverage of Palestine-related events at United Nations Headquarters and elsewhere; and promoting core United Nations messages on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East.

12. Around the world, United Nations information centres in Algiers, Ankara, Beirut, Canberra, Jakarta, Manama, Panama, Tokyo and Warsaw and the United Nations regional information centre in Brussels took part in the promotion of the International Year with a wide range of activities, ranging from organizing commemorative events, exhibitions, seminars and lectures to granting interviews, arranging for media coverage and newspaper supplements.

13. The Department used all of its information outlets and products, including social media platforms, to highlight events related to the International Year. The multilingual United Nations News Centre portal provided coverage in all six official

languages and across social media platforms. The United Nations News Centre published in English and French a total of 326 related stories on issues affecting the Palestinian people, and many more were published in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish.

14. Other news stories covered included the international meeting on the question of Jerusalem, held in Ankara; a fashion show held at United Nations Headquarters featuring Palestinian-born designer Jamal Taslaq, and organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations ahead of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; and the illumination of the United Nations Headquarters building with an iconic image from the photo archives of UNRWA as part of the activities related to the conclusion of the International Year.

15. United Nations Radio, which is available in all six official languages and in Kiswahili and Portuguese, provided coverage on the events related to the International Year and on the question of Palestine. The United Nations Radio Arabic Unit published more than 400 items (including news items, feature stories, interviews and weekly programmes) related to the question of Palestine over the past year, generating over 270,000 page views and thousands of social media hits. The lecture by Noam Chomsky, on the occasion of the International Year, was also highlighted, as was the UNRWA-sponsored exhibition "The Long Journey" at United Nations Headquarters.

16. United Nations Television and the UNifeed satellite distribution system produced and distributed to broadcasters around the world stories and videos on the question of Palestine. Two in particular were widely disseminated on news and social media platforms: the video of an iconic image of Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk Camp, in Damascus, which was displayed across a giant screen at Times Square in New York, and the video of a fashion show by designer Jamal Taslaq at United Nations Headquarters.

United Nations Office at Geneva

17. On 18 September the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People hosted the screening of the Emmy-award winning and Oscar-nominated documentary *5 Broken Cameras* at the United Nations Office at Geneva, which was followed by a question-and-answer session with Emad Burnat, the Palestinian co-director.

18. On the sidelines of the special meeting on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 26 November, the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine hosted an exhibition describing the history of the question of Palestine and a concert featuring Palestinian musicians.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

19. In cooperation with the United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Humanitarian Country Team Advocacy Working Group, several advocacy events were held, among them one on 22 October, which was organized on the occasion of the annual olive harvest, a key livelihood activity for Palestinians in the

West Bank and Gaza. The event highlighted the challenges faced by Palestinian farmers and agricultural communities in relation to the olive harvest owing to movement and access restrictions and settler violence.

United Nations Development Programme

20. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Arab States, through the UNDP office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, supported the International Conference of Local Authorities in Solidarity with the Palestinian people "Local Authorities at the heart of the State of Palestine", held in Ramallah from 20 to 23 November. The conference, which focused on the role of local authorities in the Palestinian State-building process, was opened by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and was attended by diplomats, representatives of United Nations agencies and 250 international participants from 22 countries, including parliamentarians.

United Nations Members and Observer Missions

21. Member States and Observer Missions organized a wide variety of activities and events in support of the International Year, ranging from raising the diplomatic status of the Palestinian representation to holding round tables and exhibitions and funding specific activities.

22. The Committee received submissions from Cuba, Japan, Latvia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Turkey, Viet Nam, Palestine and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation. The Committee continues to receive information on activities undertaken in support of the International Year.

23. While all the activities are too numerous to mention in this report, some of the highlights include the following:

(a) Upgrading of the Palestinian representation in Colombia to the level of diplomatic mission;

(b) Conclusion of a twin cities agreement between Bethlehem, Palestine, and Cuzco, Peru;

(c) Inauguration of a street named after the State of Palestine in Buenos Aires;

(d) Holding of an academic conference on the theme "The question of Jerusalem through the lens of international law in Moscow";

(e) Organization of the "Al-Aqsa Photo Exhibition" in Mecca and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, by the Organization for Islamic Cooperation;

(f) Holding of the twentieth session of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation in Marrakech, Morocco, on 17 and 18 January 2014;

(g) Launch of the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development in Tokyo on 13 and 14 February;

(h) Launch of activities for the International Year in Palestine, in Ramallah, Palestine on 9 April;

(i) Organization of an exhibit on Palestine in Havana from 25 to 31 May;

(j) Holding of the conference on the tenth anniversary of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in Al Bireh, Palestine on 9 July;

(k) Holding of a topical discussion of Palestine at the seventeenth Congress of the Latin American and Caribbean Continental Organization of Students in Managua from 17 to 23 August;

(l) Holding of the International Conference of Local Authorities in Solidarity with the Palestinian People "Local Authorities at the Heart of the State of Palestine" in Ramallah, Palestine, from 21 to 23 November;

(m) Holding of the peace summit organized by the League of Arab States and the Confederation of Industrialist Businesswomen and Businessmen of Turkey in Ankara on 29 November;

(n) Holding of lectures on the question of Palestine in the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica in November;

(o) Funding of events and activities hosted by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations in New York by Saudi Arabia;

(p) Sponsoring by Qatar of the English edition of the book *The Palestinians: Photographs of a Land and its People from 1839 to the Present Day*, which was launched on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in November and subsequently distributed to all Member States, international organizations, United Nations officials, libraries in the United States and other recipients.

IV. Conclusion

24. It was hoped that the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would usher in the conclusion of a final peace agreement within the agreed time frame of nine months. Instead, 2014 saw the breakdown of the negotiations, followed by the disastrous conflict in Gaza and rising tensions, including of a religious character, in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The year saw the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, and scores of violent events, including attacks on religious sites. At the end of 2014, a draft resolution, aimed at setting a timetable for negotiations and paving the way for an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, failed to gain the necessary votes in the Security Council. In the immediate aftermath Palestine signed a wide number of international accords, including the Rome Statute to accede to the International Criminal Court. The Court has now opened a preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine.

25. Despite the deterioration of the situation on the ground and in the political arena, the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, through its many special activities and events, effectively promoted solidarity with the Palestinian people and generated further momentum and international support for the realization of their inalienable rights. During 2014, Sweden extended full recognition to Palestine and the parliaments of Spain, France, Ireland, Portugal, Belgium and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland recommended the same to their respective Governments. Also in 2014, the Palestine

Liberation Organization and Hamas reached a deal to end their political division since 2007 and form a national consensus government, thus putting Gaza and the Palestinian-controlled areas in the West Bank under a single administration. The year also saw Palestine accede to a number of key international treaties and conventions, among them the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Additional Protocol I thereto, the 1907 Hague Convention (IV), respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention against Torture, the Convention against Corruption, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. All these developments signify solid progress in Palestinian State-building and in the path of Palestine to becoming a full Member State of the United Nations.

26. In 2015 the Committee will build on these achievements of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and will work towards maintaining international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine, the question of Jerusalem, international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the peaceful settlement of the conflict, by focusing on the following priorities:

(a) Working towards an end to the occupation and progress towards a final agreement between Israel and Palestine;

(b) Addressing obstacles to peace requiring urgent action, such as illegal Israeli settlements, the situation in Jerusalem, the blockade of Gaza, the treatment of Palestinian prisoners and the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(c) Mobilization of international, regional and national action.

To reach these goals, the Committee will continue in 2015 to highlight the responsibilities of Israel, the occupying Power; maintain its support for revitalized and active international involvement on the question of Palestine; promote an in-depth dialogue between Palestinian and international legal experts; and mobilize international support to mitigate the difficult financial situation of Palestine.